NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

Vol. 49/No. 8

June 2006

Up Front from the President

When the expected answer of math or social studies or some other subject was replaced by "students" to the question "What do you teach?", the point was made. First and foremost we teach students.

My experience of being in the classroom in addition to simply observing my colleagues over the years has provided me with ample evidence that going the extra mile is as common as discarded Tim Horton's cups on our highways, moose in Gros Morne National Park or seals off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Examples are everywhere. Some recent examples. The music teacher who directed her choir to perform for the wreath laying ceremonies during lunch hour and beyond for the Day of Mourning for Workers Injured or Killed on the Job. That same evening two music teachers (husband and wife) give up their Friday night in Grand Falls-Windsor to direct their choirs for the Federation of School Councils. The robotics mentor in Deer Lake who stayed at school each evening until 10 o'clock for weeks to help students prepare for an upcoming competition. The junior high teachers who wrote, directed and produced a play which provided confidence to, and life long memories for, an incredible number of their students in Conception Bay South. The teachers in a Corner Brook elementary school who developed the web site that provided enhanced learning experiences and memories for the whole student population. All performances from my perspective were awesome and could withstand scrutiny anywhere on our planet and serve as examples of the lengths that teachers regularly go to for their students.

I feel like I could go on and on giving examples of teachers going out of their way. The rehearsing and practicing evenings and weekends for science fairs and music festivals and speak-offs and sports meets of all sorts and drama festivals and Christmas concerts and spring concerts and proms and graduations and educational excursions to other parts of the province and beyond and writing contests and math competitions and spelling competitions, all in addition to the "outcomes" and heritage fairs and field trips and guest speakers and photography clubs and chess clubs and student councils. I have not mentioned the extra classes and tutorials in any and all subject areas and the supplementary material and the extra time searching for it, besides the time taken to complement a student and the time taken to place notes and comments on papers and tests, all of which are not "required" but we know are helpful because we teach students – not subjects. Maybe the Fraser Institute or the Atlantic Institute on Market Studies could find an appropriate assessment tool to 'rank' those qualities.

It has been said that of all the areas that have improved since this country became a Canadian province, nothing rivals the progress that has occurred in education. Presently, our teachers are by far the best educated and prepared that we have ever seen. We are confidently providing our students with schooling second to none in this world. Dr. David Dibbon says that, "Critics of educators often say teaching is not rocket science and they are correct – good teaching is much more complex." Teachers so often go the extra mile and I have been blessed to have been given the opportunity to see so many examples of this throughout our wonderful province. If you haven't been told lately, please know from my perspective that you are appreciated. We are in good hands.

Kevin

THE bulletin

Lesley-Ann Browne
Editor

Michelle Lamarche
Editorial Assistant

Linda Babstock, John Bishop, Elliott Green, Louise King
Design • Printing • Distribution

Linda Farrell
Online Services

The Bulletin is published eight times a year during the school year by the Nfld. and Labrador Teachers' Assn., 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, A1B 1W1.
Tel: 709-726-3223; 1-800-563-3599
Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582
e-mail: labrowne@nlta.nl.ca
Internet Address: www.nlta.nl.ca

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Advertising inquiries should be directed to: Michelle Lamarche, Ext. 227
mlamarche@nlta.nl.ca

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Opening/Closing Dates of Schools

In accordance with the *Schools Act 1997*, the Department of Education has officially announced the opening and closing dates of schools for the next three years.

School Year 2006-07
Opening day of school for teachers: September 5, 2006
Closing day of school for teachers: June 22, 2007

School Year 2007-08
Opening day of school for teachers: September 4, 2007
Closing day of school for teachers: June 27, 2008

School Year 2008-09
Opening day of school for teachers: September 2, 2008
Closing day of school for teachers: June 26, 2009

ATTENTION
SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

The NLTA has set up a **substitute teacher email group**. This group is utilized to send information directly to substitute teachers through email.

If you would like to be included in this email group, please send an email to **mail@nlta.nl.ca.** Please send this email from the address you wish to receive the information and include your name for reference purposes.

Any questions should be directed to:
Lesley-Ann Browne, Communications
labrowne @nlta.nl.ca
Tel: 726-3223, ext. 228 or
1-800-563-3599 *(toll free)*

Important Information

The Newfoundlandand Labrador Teachers' Association are doing our part to help accommodate those who are sensitive to fragrances and other scented products.

We ask that you do yours by not wearing perfume, aftershave, cologne, hair spray, scented creams or lotions, or other scented products while visiting our building.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Be Aware of the Air We Share!

A message from the Occupational Health and Safety Committe of the NLTA.
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR

Fill y'er boots with donations for Janeway Day

The children at Woodland Primary in Grand Falls-Windsor raised an impressive $1,302.05 during Janeway Day in the Schools this past February. Darlene Sullivan, Principal at Woodland Primary, said this year one of their very creative parents from the Friends of Woodland Primary Parents' Association came up with a unique challenge for students.

Holly Dwyer came up with the Fill Y'er Boots challenge. She gave each teacher a jar with a picture of a pair of rubber boots on it saying "Fill Your Boots for Janeway Day". Students were asked to drop their change in the bottle in each classroom and once their jars were filled, students would get to empty their change into a big rubber boot in the office on Valentine's Day.

Principal Sullivan told the students that if their contributions filled one rubber boot by February 14, she would wear the rubber boots, on the wrong feet, and visit them at their Valentine's party during the day.

"As the week proceeded we realized we were going to fill more than one boot," Ms. Sullivan said. "So I changed the challenge from filling one boot to see how many we could fill in total."

Woodland Primary Principal Darlene Sullivan, along with Grade 1 student Cody Lawson and Grade 2 student Brittany Brown, proudly display the money raised for The Janeway during their Fill Y'er Boots Challenge.
Photo credit: Wendy Houlihan, The Advertiser

"We filled eight boots in the end. There were kids coming in with ice cream containers full of change from home. They had been saving it for another occasion, but they really felt the Janeway Hospital was a good cause. They really were up for this challenge and I am proud of them," she added.

Ms. Sullivan promoted the event with lots of enthusiasm and went into the classrooms to educate students on the Janeway Hospital and what their money would be used for.

On Valentine's Day, Ms. Sullivan kept her promise. After some help from Grade 1 student Cody Lawson and Grade 2 student Brittany Brown, both of whom spent time at the Janeway this year, the principal donned her size 14 orange and blue rubber boots, on the wrong feet, and headed off to visit her students.

"One thing that really impressed me about this challenge was the fact it wasn't for anything tangible that the students could win," said Ms. Sullivan. "It wasn't about money or a big prize. It wasn't for anything for them. It was to see the principal dressed funny, and I am pleasantly surprised that's what motivated them."

(Information for this news item was taken from an article written by Wendy Houlihan, Associate Editor, The Advertiser, in the February 16, 2006 edition.)

BONAVISTA

Matthew Elementary hosts reception for history

On April 27, 2006, Matthew Elementary School in Bonavista hosted a reception for Memorial University of Newfoundland to commemorate the history of education in our province.

Several years ago Memorial University of Newfoundland and its partners began a project to capture the history of teaching and learning in our province on a multitude of display boards. The first of the storyboards revealed that the first teacher, and the first school in Newfoundland, existed in Bonavista. The project committee felt it wise to

return to Bonavista to capture the story of education at the millennium so that information could form an informational panel that would conclude the historical story they set out to tell.

The project concluded with 24 informational panels, and on the day of the reception Dr. Alice Collins, Dean of Education for Memorial University, presented Matthew Elementary and Discovery Collegiate with the first and last panels, in recognition of their involvement in the project. The entire series are now displayed in the main foyer of the G.A. Hickman Building at Memorial, and are well worth viewing.

Also on hand for the presentation were Dr. Glenn Sheppard from the Faculty of Education at MUN; Paula Smith, President of the Landfall Branch of the NLTA; Her Worship, Betty Fitzgerald, Mayor of Bonavista; Daniel O'Brien, Principal of Matthew Elementary; and Gordon Broderick, Principal of Discovery Collegiate.

l-r: Dr. Roy Kelleher (member, History of Education Project); Gordon Broderick (Principal, Discovery Collegiate); Paula Smith (President, Landfall Branch NLTA); Dr. Jerome Delaney (Faculty member, MUN); Dr. Alice Collins (Dean, Faculty of Education, MUN); Dr. Sharon Penney (Faculty member, MUN); Dr. Glenn Sheppard (member, History of Education Project); Daniel O'Brien (Principal, Matthew Elementary)

MARYSTOWN

Students attend National Youth Summit

Teacher Vivian Rose and six of her students from Marystown Central High School were selected to represent Newfoundland and Labrador at the third annual Historica YouthLinks Summit, held this year at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, from May 9 to 13.

The theme for the 2006 Summit was *Defining Citizenship: Youth Challenges*. The student delegates from across Canada spent the week exploring the central Summit question: What are my responsibilities and opportunities as both a Canadian citizen and as a global citizen? Queen's University, the National Film Board of Canada and 7th Floor Media hosted workshops that taught the students how to create animation, PSAs and online publications. The students used these tools to interpret the central question and to present their work on the final day of the Summit.

In addition, each day of the Summit one of the provincial/territorial delegations presented and defended their choice for the Canadian historical figure they thought should be awarded the Order of Historica. The students debated, discussed, campaigned for and voted on candidates, eventually narrowing the field to one recipient.

What does it take to achieve greatness? Who has made an extraordinary contribution to a community, a region, the country? Who deserves the Order of Historica honour? The Summit delegates researched their arguments and submitted their candidates. The range of submissions illustrated the many histories that together are Canada's foundation.

The Newfoundland and Labrador delegation chose writer and popularizer of Canadian history, Pierre Berton.

(continued on page 6)

While in Kingston, the students learned about their role in the global community through excursions to CFB Kingston, Parliament Hill – where they attended Question Period and met the Speaker of the House and other MPs – as well as panel discussions about global responsibility and youth voting. They will better understand remembrance through a special panel on the Aboriginal Spirit Journey, a Calling Home Ceremony last fall that invited the spirits of Aboriginal war veterans who died in battle overseas to return to their homelands.

The 2006 YouthLinks Summit was held in partnership with Queen's University, the National Film Board of Canada and 7th Floor Media. Historica gratefully acknowledges the support of Exchanges Canada, a program of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Veterans Affairs Canada, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life and the Imperial Oil Foundation.

ST. JOHN'S

NLTA Executive Director elected as President of CAPSLE

President-Elect Edward Hancock addresses delegates at the CAPSLE AGM.

Edward Hancock, NLTA's Executive Director, was recently elected as President of the Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education (CAPSLE). The election took place during the national conference of CAPSLE held in Montreal, April 30 to May 2, 2006.

CAPSLE is a national Canadian organization devoted to providing an open forum for the examination of legal issues applied to the education environment. Its membership is comprised of teachers' association representatives, lawyers and legal firms whose practice involves educational matters, school board trustees and officials, teachers and administrators throughout the country.

CAPSLE is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors elected at the annual meeting which takes place at the national conference. Ed has been a Director of CAPSLE for six years, having first been elected in May 2000. He served as Secretary-Treasurer of CAPSLE in 2004-05 and was Vice-President for 2005-06.

The theme for the 2006 conference was *Civil Rights and Education*. The list of wide-ranging legal/educational issues dealt with at the conference included such topics as children's rights, freedom of expression, special education, parental rights, parental harassment, accommodation of special needs students, bullying and 'cyber-bulling', privacy issues, and safe schools practices.

CORNER BROOK

Students raise money to build wells in India

Students at C.C. Loughlin School in Corner Brook learned a great deal about global citizenship this past March. Students first watched an educational video and learned that many women and children in India are responsible daily to carry up to 25 litres of water from the river; the same river which people bathe and wash their clothes in. They also learned that a child dies every second due to water-related diseases.

SOPAR (Society for Partnership), a non-profit organization working towards reducing poverty in developing countries, runs a program by which schools can contribute $750 to build a well for a village in India. To inspire a sense of achievement, once SOPAR builds the well in India, they place a plaque with the school's name on it at its base. SOPAR also sends a letter and a picture of the well to each child, presents a commemorative plaque to the school, and submits an article and photo to local newspapers.

Students at C.C. Loughlin raised money by doing extra household chores, collecting money from family members and by holding a bake sale at the school. They were so dedicated that they actually raised enough money to build three wells. Brigitte White, a Grade 4 French Immersion teacher at C.C. Loughlin, said it was very touching to hear one Grade 1 student comment that now "the boys and girls in India could go out to play" instead of having to spend time walking back and forth to the river to collect water.

The "Green Thumbs" environmental group, comprised of a portion of the school's Grades 4, 5 and 6 students, also has an opportunity to learn about India from former C.C. Loughlin teacher Janet Mews, who had spent time there. The Green Thumbs meet regularly to discuss environmental issues and take a leadership role in educating the student body on these issues.

Former C.C. Loughlin teacher, Janet Mews, talks about India to the Green Thumbs.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

NLCPA meets with Government to address concerns

In March of this year the Newfoundland and Labrador Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association (NLCPA) prepared and presented an eleven-page brief to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Joan Burke, and Child and Youth Advocate Darlene Neville. *A Brief on Issues Facing the Provision of Counselling and Psychological Services to the Newfoundland and Labrador K-12 School System* puts forward the position that the allocation of guidance counselor services based on a specific ratio is inadequate and changes need to be implemented if the needs of the students are to be met. The Brief contained numerous recommendations to address the concerns and suggestions of the NLCPA in these areas and that further exploring of solutions should be investigated.

A meeting was held between the Executive of the NLCPA and the Minister of Education to discuss the information contained in the Brief. The meeting focused on the need for lower ratios of counselors and psychologists, workload issues, wait lists for Psycho Educational and Psychological Assessments, the difficulties finding time to provide individual therapy or programming, financial reimbursement issues, and the career counseling needs within the Senior High school program.

The meeting was made possible by the support of the NLTA and the Western School District.

l-r: Chris Cooper, President, NLCPA; David Devine, Parliamentary Secretary to Minister Burke; Hon. Joan Burke, Minister of Education; Ruth George, Communications, NLCPA; Tom George, Vice-President, NLCPA; Dave Warren, Treasurer, NLCPA; and Gerald Galway, former Assistant Deputy Minister, Primary, Elementary, Secondary Branch.

Memorial
University of Newfoundland
Faculty of Education

Thank You

Co-operating Teachers and School/District Administrators

The Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, would like to take this opportunity to thank all the teachers and administrators in the province who have participated in and supported the Teacher Internship Program. Research has shown that students identify the teaching internship as one of the most rewarding components of their teacher education program and we in the Faculty recognize that the quality of these experiences are directly related to the skills, abilities and commitment levels of Co-operating Teachers.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to develop and prepare novice teachers for successful entry into the teaching profession. The Faculty of Education is committed to offering a teacher education program that is recognized for excellence and innovation in education and we look forward to working with you, your schools, and your school districts to achieve these goals.

Best wishes for the remainder of the school year and for a well deserved summer vacation.

6th Annual Provincial Teacher Recruitment Fair a huge success

The 6th Annual Provincial Teacher Recruitment Fair took place on May 11 at the G.A. Hickman Building, St. John's campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The Fair provides job opportunities and related information for students, teachers, or others interested in entry into the profession. The Fair is also open to substitute teachers and other interested individuals who may be considering a career in education.

Information booths were set up by school districts, the NLTA, the Department of Education, the Faculty of Education at MUN, and other educational partners.

The Provincial Teacher Recruitment Fair is organized in partnership with Memorial University of Newfoundland, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Department of Education – Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association.

School Representative Seminars

Coming in Fall 2006

A series of School Representative Seminars will take place as a continuation of the ongoing triennial program in the fall of 2006. The province has been divided into nine regions and three seminars will be held in the fall. Schools will have the opportunity for representatives to attend every three years. School representatives will receive specific information directly from the NLTA office.

GROUP 1 – AVALON (GROUP A)
October 20-21, 2006 – Comfort Inn, St. John's
Branches Attending: Conception Bay Centre, Conception Bay South, St. John's Centre, St. Mary's Bay, Southern Shore, Waterford Valley

GROUP 2 – GREEN BAY/GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR/CONNAIGRE
October 27-28, 2006 – Mount Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor
Branches Attending: Bay d'Espoir, Belleoram-Wreck Cove, Exploits Valley, Green Bay, Harton, Seagaulher

GROUP 3 – CORNER BROOK AND SOUTHWEST
October 27-28, 2006 – Glynmill Inn, Corner Brook
Branches Attending: Appalachia, Burgeo, Humber, Port aux Basques, Rameaux

CANADA

A study to investigate the impact of leadership on student learning

In spite of the plethora of research in the area of leadership, even after decades of school renewal efforts, it is still not clear just how much leadership matters, how important those effects are in promoting the learning of all children and promoting the essential ingredients of successful leadership. This spring, researchers at Memorial University (Dr. David Dibbon), University of Calgary (Dr. Charlie Webber) and the University of Toronto (Dr. Ken Leithwood) are conducting a national study to investigate the impact of leadership on student learning and they are providing an opportunity for schools (teachers and administrators) from Newfoundland and Labrador to participate.

This research is based on the premise that "effective leadership leads to high quality teaching and learning for all children" and, further, that there is a "gaping hole" or "lack of solid and in-depth empirical evidence establishing the connection between leader performance and changes in student learning". Accordingly, this research is designed to produce empirical findings that will enable practitioners, policy-makers, and education theorists to better understand how educational leaders strengthen linkages between leadership practice and improved teaching and learning.

If you have not already received an invitation to participate in this research you should receive one shortly. If asked, please take the time (20 minutes) to complete the survey.

Volunteers sought for Dr. Lynda Younghusband study

Lynda Younghusband, PhD., is continuing her research on teacher stress. She is interested in interviewing teachers who have experienced acts of violence (incidents of abuse, threats, insults or humiliation, directed toward and intended to hurt teachers physically, emotionally, psychologically or socially). **All contacts will be strictly confidential.**

If you are interested in participating please contact Dr. Lynda Younghusband, Tel: 726-8145 (h); 737-3501 (w); e-mail ybnb@nfld.net.

VERNON M. HATCHER

It is with deep regret and sorrow that family, former colleagues and friends announce the sudden passing of Vernon M. Hatcher on April 10, 2006 following a brief period of hospitalization at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's.

Vernon was born and educated at Ramea. After graduation from high school he spent one year working in the Halifax area, before returning to Memorial University to pursue training in education. He graduated in 1968 with a Bachelor of Education and in 1970 completed his Bachelor of Arts.

Other than his initial year as a teacher at Woody Point, his entire teaching career was spent at St. Boniface School in his hometown of Ramea. His years as an educator comprised of a variety of postings, including Principal and Vice-Principal, and he retired from the position of classroom teacher in 1994.

While Vernon had a strong love of students and teaching, his first love was family. He married Sarah Fudge in January 1968 and had two children, Marc and Verna. In recent years he took great pride and delight in spending quality time with his only grandchild Danny.

Vernon's dedication to children was most obvious from his professional involvement at the classroom level. However, it was equally evident through his community membership in child-centered volunteering. His 12 years as an officer of the local Sea Cadet Corp CHURCHILL contributed to training and leadership for hundreds of young men and women. He served for 24 years as a member of the Ramea Public Library Board and was a Charter Member and first Secretary of the Ramea Lions Club.

After retirement in 1994, Vernon and Sarah invested in a trailer and spent years of quality recreational camping at South Brook Park neat Pasadena. His favorite recreation activity was reading.

Vernon brought the same style and quality to teaching that he did to all other aspects of his life – dedication, respect, and organization. While our physical presence is often measured in a few short years, our impact and memory are eternal.

(Submitted by Leo Freeborn on behalf of family, former colleagues, and friends.)

RUTH CROSBIE, 1924 – 2006

Ruth Crosbie was a gardener extraordinaire. Her garden in Steady Brook with its many varieties of trees and shrubs, flowers of every colour and description, every vegetable that would grow there, and a variety of herbs was a source of pride for her and the envy of all who saw it. Everything bloomed beautifully under her tender loving care.

Ruth was a teacher extraordinaire; a rose in the profession. She tended her students with the same pride and tender loving care she gave her garden and, whether they were orchids or wildflowers, they bloomed under her care.

Ruth was a colleague extraordinaire. She was a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge and a solid authority on a wide range of topics. We listened with great respect to what she had to say. She listened to everyone's opinions and we knew, when it was her turn to speak, she would culminate all of them. When she gave advice, we valued it.

Ruth was a lady extraordinaire. She was a very humble person with an aura of elegance surrounding her. This was evident in the way she walked, talked, and presented herself to the world. She was held in very high esteem by all her colleagues.

Thank you, Ruth, for showing us that the important things in life should be sown with dedication, love, and respect. May your family sow beautiful gardens from memories of you.

(Submitted by friends.)

Keeping Our Focus

by EDWARD HANCOCK

As I write this message for *The Bulletin*, another school year is rapidly drawing to a close. And what a year it has been. With all of the developments on various fronts since last September, many members have commented to me that it is indeed a positive time to be a teacher. Still others are waiting for collective agreement improvements that would mean real changes in their workload. So your Association continues to work on various fronts to maintain the momentum and keep the focus on education.

When contract negotiations began in early November, nobody could anticipate the developments we would see in a few short months. Discussions with government on pension plan funding evolved into a Memorandum of Agreement that contained, for the first time in history, provisions for sustainable, stable, long-term funding of our pension plan. From my own perspective, after nearly two decades on the NLTA administrative staff, this development ranks among the most significant since collective bargaining rights were achieved in the early 1970s.

This year has also seen unparalleled public attention to issues affecting teacher workload and classroom working conditions. The results of Dr. Lynda Younghusband's study on teacher stress, and renewed attention to Dr. Dibbon's 2004 workload study, have placed a public spotlight on issues of critical concern to teachers. These include, but are not limited to, factors affecting teacher stress, teachers' real hours of work, insufficient preparation time, classroom composition, behavioural issues, classroom violence, and bullying. One can only hope that a true realization of the depth and complexity of these matters is seeping into the public conscience.

The 2006 Provincial Budget contained, at last, positive news for education. The freeze on teacher allocations for 2006-07 means that 151 teaching positions which would have been removed due to declining enrolments will now be retained. Further, a complete review of the teacher allocation model is being undertaken. Increased funding was announced for additional board office staffing and school equipment. The instructional grant to schools has been improved to offset monies that will no longer be collected through school fees. Money was also allocated to conduct a review of the Pathways Model for Student Support Services.

All of these budget improvements are indeed positive news. However, teachers are still waiting to see what positive effects this will have on their workload and working conditions. Our focus remains on those critical elements of workload that cause many of our younger teachers to quit the profession in their early years and many of our more experienced teachers to question whether they can meet the constantly increasing demands on their time and energy. Our efforts to make real improvements in these areas have traditionally had their focus in the collective bargaining arena, as that is the process in which employees can bring to bear their collective strength. Government's view, at this point in time, is that the increased resources they have provided to education, coupled with the reviews of the teacher allocation and Pathways models, will translate into real improvements in teachers' work lives. Your Provincial Executive has decided to allow time to better evaluate the effects of these recent developments before determining the next steps on the bargaining front. (You have received specific information on this in a recent *President's Digest*.) The focus on teachers' workload and working conditions is being maintained. It is your Association's position that government must provide sufficient resources to education that will allow for real improvements in the critical elements which affect classroom working and learning conditions. That focus will be maintained as this school year draws to a close and as we move forward into 2006-07.

A sincere thank you to all of you in our classrooms, schools, and district/regional offices for your efforts, dedication, and commitment to our students over the past year. It is you who work "where the rubber hits the road" in education and it is on your behalf that your Association continues to focus its efforts on those things which affect you and your students the most. On behalf of all your staff at the NLTA office, I extend best wishes to each and every one of you for a safe and enjoyable summer.

Ed

Awards of Personal and Professional Excellence

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association is pleased to announce that the following teachers have received awards for personal and professional excellence.

Bancroft Award

Fred Wood

Fred Wood of St. John's, is recipient of the 2006 Bancroft Award. This award recognizes outstanding service at the Branch level of the NLTA for the betterment of education and professionalism of teachers.

A teacher for over 32 years, Fred has been very active at the Branch level serving on numerous volunteer committees, executive offices, and leading or being involved in projects for the Branch or for the cause of teachers in general.

Fred was nominated by the Conception Bay South Branch and then elected to the Provincial Executive Council of the NLTA where he served from 1999-2005. While an Executive member he continued to be supportive of his local branch members and has always encouraged teachers to become involved in their Association at the local level.

Fred is currently a teacher at Queen Elizabeth Regional High School in Foxtrap.

Barnes Award

Mary Dinn

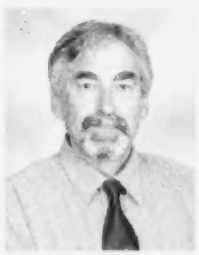
Mary Dinn of St. John's, is recipient of the 2006 Barnes Award. This award recognizes outstanding professional development services provided by teachers at the Special Interest Council level of the NLTA.

A teacher for over 19 years, Mary has always been a strong advocate for music education in this province and throughout her career has been active at the Special Interest Council level to further the cause of music education and curriculum development.

Mary was President of the NLTA Eastern and Provincial Music Special Interest Councils from 1997-99, and President of the Provincial Music SIC again from 1999-2001. She was a member of the NLTA SIC Restructuring Committee, a member of the Executive of the Canadian Music Educator's Association, and a member of numerous groups and committees in an advisory capacity in the area of music, fine arts, and music programming.

Mary is a teacher at École Ste-Thérèse/St. Teresa's School in St. John's.

Special Recognition Award


Philip Wood

Philip Wood of Bay Roberts, is recipient of the 2006 Special Recognition Award. This award is presented annually to an active NLTA member who has made a major contribution to the cultural, social and/or community life of Newfoundland and Labrador.

A teacher for over 28 years, Philip has always been a community advocate who has provided integral service to the schools where he served and to the community at large. He has always encouraged strong involvement and participation in community activities and has performed outstanding work in these areas.

Philip is actively involved with the Royal Canadian Legion at the provincial and local levels and has been extremely active promoting the areas of poppy and Remembrance Day activities. In 2003 he was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal for Community Service for his volunteer work and dedication on the part of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Philip is currently the Principal of Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts.

Plan Ahead and Register Early

Pre-Retirement Seminars

by DON ASH

Teachers within two years of retirement eligibility should register for one of the NLTA's seven Pre-Retirement Seminars being held in the fall of 2006 in Stephenville, Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, and three in St. John's. These seminars are held in accordance with Association policy as part of its overall program of pre-retirement counselling. Clause 18.12 of the Provincial Collective Agreement and Clause 29.12 of the Labrador West Collective Agreement provide two days paid leave to attend these seminars.

Information sessions will deal with topics such as the Teachers' Pension Plan, Severance Pay, Employment Insurance, NLTA Group Insurance, Financial and Estate Planning and the Canada Pension Plan. As well, time is available for individual counselling of prospective retirees by the various consultants.

NOTE: The full text of the NLTA Policy on Pre-Retirement Seminars and the application form can be found on the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca). A link on the main page called "Forms Online" will bring you to the applicable form and policy. The NLTA policy will also be mailed to teachers with confirmation of registration.

Things You Should Know About Attending

• Potential participants must register for a particular seminar and apply to their District for leave.

• Only those teachers eligible to retire during or before June 2009 will be eligible to attend.

• Registration must be received at the NLTA Office at least four weeks in advance to ensure approval of attendance.

• The Association reserves the right to refuse acceptance of registration forms at any particular seminar if the registration has not been received at the NLTA office in accordance with Association policy.

• It is the responsibility of the individual participant to make arrangements for hotel accommodations, should any be required. Please reference that you are attending an NLTA function and this should provide a reduced rate which is available to persons travelling on Association related business.

• Travel expenses shall be reimbursed in accordance with the following provisions:

i) participants shall be reimbursed the lesser of travel by private vehicle or public transportation to the seminar closest to the place of residence. In the event that a teacher requests and is accepted to attend a seminar other than the closest seminar, the participant shall only be reimbursed the amount applicable for travel to the closest seminar.

ii) payment for travel in a private vehicle shall be at the rate of 12¢ per kilometre for the return trip from residence to seminar site.

iii) travel via public transportation will be reimbursed at the rate of 80 percent of ferry, taxi, or economy airfare; in the case of airfare, the lesser of excursion (seat sale) or 80 percent of economy airfare will be paid, where excursion (seat sale) fares can be arranged. Receipts shall be required for all reimbursement.

iv) no expenses will be paid to participants living or teaching in the community where the seminar is held.

v) a spouse is welcome to accompany the participating teacher to the pre-retirement seminar, but no expenses will be covered.

• All other expenses, such as meals, accommodation and child care, are the responsibility of the participating teacher.

• Expenses will be provided for one pre-retirement seminar only and a teacher participant shall be permitted to attend one seminar only. (Notwithstanding this, a teacher may attend a second seminar as a spouse.)

• Teachers must attend the seminar location closest to their place of residence, except in cases where the mode, cost or availability of transportation necessitates otherwise.

• Directors and Assistant Directors, and spouses, are welcome to attend one pre-retirement seminar, but no expenses will be paid in accordance with this policy.

Given the increasing numbers of teachers eligible to retire, we reserve the right to limit the number of people who will be granted access, depending on the physical facilities available at each site. Consequently, **it is imperative that teachers plan ahead and register early in the event that registrations have to be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.**

2006 Pre-Retirement Seminar

REGISTRATION FORM

Name

Home Address

Postal Code

Home Telephone

Social Insurance Number

School Name

School Telephone

Please check which session you will be attending:

- ☐ **Oct. 12-13** – Hotel Gander, Gander
- ☐ **Oct. 19-20** – Holiday Inn, Stephenville
- ☐ **Oct. 26-27** – Mt. Peyton, Grand Falls-Windsor
- ☐ **Nov. 2-3** – Holiday Inn, St. John's
- ☐ **Nov. 9-10** – Greenwood Inn, Corner Brook
- ☐ **Nov. 30 - Dec. 1** – Holiday Inn, St. John's
- ☐ **Dec. 7-8** – Holiday Inn, St. John's

Will your spouse be attending? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of spouse (if attending)

Earliest eligibility date for pension

Have you attended a previous pre-retirement seminar?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Note:

- Teachers within two years of retirement (on or before June 2009) are eligible to attend.
- All participants must pre-register.
- You will receive confirmation prior to seminar.
- Travel costs will be paid according to policy and only to the nearest seminar.
- Teachers are advised to bring a calculator.

Please submit registration form to:

Melanie Jaster
Benefits and Economic Services Division,
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL A1B 1W1
Fax: 709-726-4302; 1-877-711-6582 (*toll free*)

NOTE: As space is limited, registrations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

FOR NLTA OFFICE USE ONLY		
Date Received	Confirmation Sent	Information Package Sent

Chart Your Course

by CLAUDETTE E.S. COOMBS

Each of us would like to be healthy and living a pleasant and rewarding life, but not many of us are completely contented with our current status. We think we "should" eat better, be more active, engage in more recreation and relaxation and take more time for relationships. We dream of living a life that looks somewhat different than our current daily reality. Unfortunately, we rarely get to build in those improvements and we continue spending our time in a less than satisfactory personal world.

"If we decide to do the simple or unimportant tasks because they are easy and make us feel good when completed, we are missing out on opportunities to move toward accomplishing our important goals."

Creating desired change is the key to improving our lives... however, creating change is not automatic, not easy and not instantaneous! Successfully making positive changes requires determined, consistent effort in a specific, pre-determined direction. Change is a result of a conscious decision to rid ourselves of some of the discomfort we experience by remaining where we are. When we are uncomfortable enough, we start to look seriously at options for improvements; until then, we look at excuses which allow us to maintain our current status. We're too busy or too tired; it takes too much time, effort or resources; it is too difficult, troublesome or unfamiliar; or we just don't know where to start! Change will only happen when we are ready and committed to doing the necessary work to make it happen. As we know, smokers don't simply quit because they suddenly learn that smoking isn't good for their health!

Fortunately, there are plenty of good strategies to prepare us. We can increase our awareness and knowledge of the benefits and the best methods for incorporating change into our routines and develop skills to make the process less demanding and success more likely.

Clearly define the changes you want... if our dreams of the future are vague, then we have no concrete indicators to let us know if we are making any progress or even if we are moving along the right path! If we wish to lead a healthier, happier life then we need to define what that means. Is it choosing a different lifestyle? Adopting a new attitude? Rearranging priorities? As we set targets for each area of our lives, to make it a reality we must define how to get there, in explicit detail.

Identify and plan for predictable obstacles... and there are many! If there weren't, we would have made the changes long ago. Plan before acting. This prevents wasted time and disillusionment with encountering obstacles that delay, distract or sabotage our efforts. Commitment and self-discipline are key concepts to ensuring success. We would consider it ridiculous that students would expect to get a "B" grade without doing the assignments, studying for exams or attending classes. Yet we sometimes vaguely feel that we should be able to live healthier lives without doing the appropriate preparation or consistently following through with plans or a schedule. Be honest with yourself, and others, in identifying the things which you can control. Don't give up too early when a little creative thinking, yours or a friend's, can help change your thinking and attitude about what is possible. Yes, we live in a rainy climate, but buying rain gear or walking in the school gym are alternatives to not walking at all! Living healthier is not a monumental task. It begins with incorporating a variety of simple strategies into our routines and schedules.

Establish routines... for the recurrent tasks of daily living. Routines help organize our days and make life more predictable. Without thinking, we know what is expected next. We can often respond based on time, activity or location cues. "Oh! Supper is finished, it's time for my walk!" When behaviours become fixed routines, they develop into automatic habits and eventually we call them our lifestyles. We can take control of the habits we form or else they will naturally evolve based on our normal activities... and that's not necessarily the best thing. If we

get used to regularly staying up late to finish correcting, thereby neglecting self care or relationships, this becomes a habit. Eventually, this normal practice is so familiar that we feel uncomfortable or guilty if we behave any differently.

Another important point about establishing and maintaining routines is that it adjusts the expectations of others toward us. If colleagues know that we always take a child to physiotherapy on Thursday afternoons they won't come looking for us to attend a meeting at that time. If family members know that we always walk after dinner, they know if they want something from us, it had better be arranged before we leave. It's up to us to adopt healthy routines and make them the rule, not the exception.

Get started and keep moving... procrastination is possibly the leading cause of failed initiatives. We easily come up with numerous reasons to put off "getting started". We often defer to: "when things settle down... we'll get together; I'll start walking; I'll have the time...". This is probably the excuse of choice! The solution to this mental dilemma is to select small, manageable tasks which are easily and quickly accomplished and move us toward meeting our major objectives. This gives us a sense of accomplishment and sustains motivation and progress. A word of caution: at any given time you, or someone you know, will perceive themselves to be in "crisis". Don't let this crisis determine how you handle your life. Yes! Of course there are occasions when everything else is put on hold to attend to a genuine emergency, but too often we misinterpret things as emergencies. This takes away from our sense of control over our lives and detracts from our focus on achieving goals. We can learn to handle emergencies without losing personal focus.

Evaluate the match between priorities and actions... to ensure that if you want to climb a mountain, you are heading in the right direction! When you know your goal, it is not difficult to determine whether your actions support achieving that goal or are roadblocks to it. Don't just give away your time, energy or other resources to a squeaky wheel. Before taking on new tasks or agreeing to do something else, determine where that fits with your own priorities. If we decide to do the simple or unimportant tasks because they are easy and make us feel good when completed, we are missing out on opportunities to move toward accomplishing our important goals. Consider the opportunities you have and the decisions you make. Consider also what you have traded for your choices!

For example, if an overflowing e-mail inbox is a hindrance to efficient communication or use of time, you obviously need to deal with the situation differently from your current practice. Set aside a period of time, which is reasonable given the magnitude of the task and other existing demands. As with any routine, it helps if this task is undertaken at the same time every day, with the same time limits. Make decisions about every piece of mail as you see it. Immediately delete what you don't want, handle things requiring minimal response and schedule time for those requiring significant effort. Some things can be kept in a separate file but don't use that as a means of delaying decisions about junk!

Similarly to our inbox, changing our lifestyles really is a simple process. It's enacting the consistent commitment and self discipline which we find difficult. The following motto can inspire and direct our sustained action: "If you have rivers to cross, hang out with the bridge builders."

Claudette Coombs is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Claudette Coombs (ext. 242) or Marie Wall (ext. 265).

Profile of a Branch President

Trudy Whittle-Upshall

Rushoon-Terrenceville Branch

Trudy Whittle-Upshall has worked in several schools on the Burin Peninsula. She began her teaching career at Jacques Fontaine All Grade in 1996. Since 1998 she has worked in special education and has also been responsible for a variety of courses at the primary, elementary, junior high and senior high levels. From 1998-99 Trudy worked at St. Joseph's All Grade and St. Thomas' School, Grand La Pierre as a Criteria E teacher and senior high special education teacher. From 1999-2000 she worked at Christ the King School in Rushoon as a special education and math teacher. She has been teaching at Fortune Bay Academy since September 2000 and currently teaches two senior high English courses and Career Development 2211. She also teaches social studies, science and technology in Grade 3.

Trudy completed a B.Ed. (Elementary) from Memorial University in 1995, a Special Education Degree (MUN) in 1998 and an M.Ed (Counselling Psychology) in 2004 (MUN).

Trudy is currently Branch President of the NLTA Rushoon-Terrenceville Branch.

Q. Why did you become a teacher? If starting over would you make the same career choice today?

A. About 14 years ago, my family decided to provide a home for an older individual with Down's Syndrome. At the time I was beginning my second year of studies at Memorial with no major declared. Like many others, I was unable to decide what I wanted to do with my life. Following my second year of studies, I worked as Sam's respite care worker for four months, helping him to develop social and self-help skills. These positive experiences prompted my interest in the teaching profession.

Despite the challenges in the education field, I still enjoy teaching very much. If I could start over again, I would change nothing. I became a teacher because I enjoy working with children and helping them reach their learning potential, whatever that may be. It is very rewarding to see students make progress, whether it is learning to read at a new grade level, passing a difficult senior high course despite significant learning difficulties, or learning to button one's coat independently.

Q. Why did you choose to become a Branch President?

A. I became a Branch President in order to learn more about the Association and to increase my involvement with the Association.

Q. Do you feel there are any obstacles you need to overcome as a female leader within the NLTA?

A. Time is probably the biggest obstacle. Like many other female teachers working within our province, I have a busy teaching assignment which limits my ability to participate in Association activities. Despite this, I do seek opportunities to get involved in Association activities such as branch meetings, sitting on committees such as the Communications/Political Action Committee, and attending Joint Council Meetings in St. John's. I continue to take advantage of these opportunities because we, as teachers, are the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. We are the reason for its existence. I see my involvement with the Association as an opportunity to help shape education in our province.

Q. Why do you think more females are not involved at the political level within the NLTA?

A. If I had to speculate, I would think that the time and level of commitment required is a deterrent for involvement at the political level. Many females

working in the teaching profession have challenging teaching assignments coupled with the demands of parenthood. Despite that, I do see more females getting involved at the political level within the NLTA. For instance, former Provincial Executive Member Elizabeth Murphy ran for the Office of President during the last election. Additionally, there are currently several females who are branch presidents while others sit on the Provincial Executive. I think that the efforts of these individuals will result in more women assuming leadership roles within the Association in the future.

Q. If you were President of the NLTA, what would be one of your first tasks?

A. If I were President of the NLTA my first priority would be strengthening the membership. In particular, I would work with the NLTA staff to improve teachers' understanding of the various programs and services offered by the Association staff and affiliates. My involvement as branch president and as a committee member has, and continues to be, extremely valuable because I have witnessed first hand the excellent work that the NLTA staff and teacher volunteers are doing on behalf of the Association. For instance, at Joint Council meetings the branch president regularly brings teachers' concerns to the forefront so that appropriate personnel from the NLTA staff can address the concerns promptly. Teachers need to be aware of what happens "behind the scenes"! They need to know that their concerns are being addressed by NLTA staff.

My experiences with the Association continually remind me that "teachers are the Association". The staff at the NLTA work on our behalf – we provide them direction. As President I would aim to find ways (i.e. workshops for school reps, visits to schools during PD days etc.) to inform teachers about the Association and how its programs and services can benefit them directly. In doing so, we would have a stronger Association to face future educational challenges.

Q. What do you see as the biggest challenge for teachers in this province?

(continued on page 18)

A. Workload. Current bargaining clearly shows that many teachers in the province have challenging teaching assignments. If we are to nurture our students' academic, social and emotional development, we need realistic teaching assignments which take into account the myriad of learning needs that students may present in the classroom.

Q. What could the NLTA do to better serve its members?

A. As stated earlier, I think that the NLTA needs to find ways of informing its membership about the various programs and services offered. School Representative Seminars, maintenance of the NLTA website, ongoing communication via *The Bulletin* and other newsletters are critical in this endeavor.

Q. How would you improve education in your community? In your province?

A. Parental involvement, collaboration with individuals and organizations within the community and province, along with financial support from Government are key to improving educational opportunities for our children. The benefits of improvements in education will be realized when there are reasonable class sizes, appropriate support from support staff, adequate funding for the curriculum, and ongoing collaboration with individuals and organizations with expertise in child development and learning. Education will also improve through province-wide early intervention programs (i.e. Brighter Futures) since preschool children will be better prepared for the classroom setting. These positive changes will greatly enhance the quality of the educational programs being provided to our children.

In addition to the aforementioned, parents need support as their children progress through school, especially those who are unable to assist with homework and related school activities. Children need to realize the importance of education and working to their potential within and outside the classroom setting. Educators, along with representatives from other agencies, need to work with parents to ensure that these values are instilled in all children. Once this occurs, I believe that education will improve because more children will enter the classroom with more positive attitudes toward the learning process. In doing so, they will likely take advantage of the educational opportunities available in their school and within the community.

Q. If you were Minister of Education, what would be your first task/project?

A. If assigned this portfolio, my first task would be revisiting the teaching allocation formula in order to ensure that students receive the best possible education in our province. Teachers should be assigned based on student need, not merely number.

My second task would look at the level of resources and/or supports within the various schools. As Minister, I would work tirelessly to ensure that all schools have a well-maintained computer lab with adequate tech support. In addition, I would lobby for increased funding to schools to support extracurricular and co-curricular activities (i.e. substitute time to travel with teams to competitions, drama, science fairs etc.) and for school-based resources (i.e., monies for the photocopy budget, supplies necessary for the classroom such as bulletin boards, consumable supplies, etc.). Moreover, as Minister I would lobby government for increased funding so that all schools throughout our province could once again offer practical, hands-on courses such as Woodworking, Textiles or Foods 1100. In doing so, the curriculum would better reflect students' interests and abilities thereby increasing high school graduation rates.

Finally, as Minister, I would regularly consult with stakeholders in education when important issues arise. I would insist that focus groups be formed with those who have a vested interest so that critical issues are addressed in a timely manner.

As Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." By regular consulting with teachers and using the information from the consultation process, Government and educational leaders would greatly enhance the education system – their efforts would certainly support students in their endeavour to reach their learning potential.

Inter-Provincial Professional Development Online

by ALEX HICKEY & GUY ALBERT

It's 9:00 a.m., everyone finds their place around the table, puts on their headset, adjusts volume, conducts a voice check, double checks that their web site is open and then the introductions begin. In Charlottetown, PEI, Susan Deighan, Mike Ellsworth, Linda Gallant, Ted Johnston, Cathy Montgomery and Sandy Stratton meet Tina Smith, Anne Hatcher, Rosemary Savory and Michelle Squires-Dawe who are in St. John's.

St. John's group (l-r): Tina Smith, Michelle Squires-Dawe, Rosemary Savory, Anne Hatcher, Alex Hickey

Though many miles apart and in two different provinces, this group of Intermediate teachers is set to participate in their first-ever, inter-provincial professional development day. What do they have in common? They are experiencing online professional development aimed at developing literacy-based teaching strategies across the curriculum. All 10 of them are working on the same tasks, the same literacy content, at the same time through the Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC). Throughout the day all of them will use online collaborative tools to interact and share in a collaborative learning experience.

The Prince Edward Island Department of Education, acting as a lead province with the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education (CAMET), partnered with the VTC to assist with facilitation, design and development of those strategies for delivery through the Internet. These strategies were originally developed through collaboration among the four Atlantic Provinces under CAMET. This initiative, led by PEI, was to design and develop a model for online teacher professional development using the strategies.

An instructional design model was developed whereby the participating teachers were using the strategies as a means to learn about how to actually use the strategy in their own teaching practice. For example, a common literacy strategy when reading is to construct a chart known as KWL. Prior to reading a piece of writing the learner will write in the first column all that they know (K) about the topic. In the second column they write what they want (W) to know from the piece. After reading the piece the learner records what was learned (L) from the piece. Hence the name KWL!

Teachers in this PD experience were all very positive about their day, the learning experience, the online model and were able to offer many constructive suggestions to CAMET for further development. The VTC has engaged many teachers throughout the province in online professional development; however, this was the first inter-provincial session.

PEI group (back row l-r): Mike Ellsworth, Sandy Stratton, Ted Johnston; (front row l-r): Linda Gallant, Susan Deighan, Cathy Montgomery

The Cross-curricular Literacy PD Project will be made available online by each of the four Atlantic provinces in the very near future.

The PEI group was led by Guy Albert, Educational Technology Coordinator for the Prince Edward Island Department of Education while the Newfoundland and Labrador group was led by Alex Hickey, Coordinator of the Virtual Teacher Centre.

Alex Hickey

Guy Albert

Special Interest Councils Rejuvenated

Coming to All Members in September 2006

by RENE WICKS

I've got big news! News that will have an impact on you. Come September 2006 you will be provided a new service from your Association. And guess what – it's free and it's PD (apologies to all the great poets of the world)!

On Friday evening, April 28 and Saturday, April 29, approximately 30 teachers from around the province gathered in St. John's to begin the process of dramatically changing one of the major structures within the NLTA. These dedicated members of the Association have volunteered over the years to take on leadership roles within the NLTA's Special Interest Councils, and they are now working with us to create a new model that will make every teacher in the province a member of a Special Interest Council.

Special Interest Council representatives discuss implementation of the new model for council operations.

Why Change Now?

For almost 40 years the Special Interest Councils (SICs) of the NLTA have been a fundamental component of professional development programming. Like Branches, the Councils are designed to encourage widespread grassroots leadership and participation in the Association. Historically, our Special Interest Councils have played a very significant profile in providing professional development opportunities for teachers. It was and is PD planned *by* teachers *for* teachers – relevant and practical – designed to support teaching at the classroom level. Our Councils have hosted hundreds of successful conferences, have played a key role in curriculum development and implementation and in advising Executive Council on the position the Association should take on many professional issues.

In short, SICs provide valuable services to thousands of teachers. They have demonstrated that professional development is not only the responsibility of the employer but is most relevant and diverse when there is grassroots genesis.

Since the 1990s, with a dramatic decline in the availability of substitute teacher time for professional development, the SICs have experienced significant challenges. It has become increasingly difficult for teachers to obtain the necessary leave to attend SIC conferences and, as a result, active membership in many Councils has declined and the number of Councils has gone from a peak of 37 to the current 19. Without doubt, it is time to regroup. If we are to continue to offer our members opportunities for professional involvement and leadership within the NLTA, a new model must include everybody, with a focus on greater collaboration with school districts and the Department of Education.

Levels-Based Special Interest Councils

Effective September 2006, we will introduce three levels-based Special Interest Councils – Primary/Elementary, Intermediate, and Senior High. You will be provided NLTA-sponsored membership in one of those councils, depending on which level of schooling you are assigned. In the case of multi-level assignments you will have the option of choosing free membership in one of the three levels-based councils. You may also join any of the other levels councils by

registering and paying the appropriate membership fee. Look for information coming to your schools in the fall. Your NLTA school representative will play an important role in providing information, offering choices, and collecting data.

Specialized Councils

As part of the restructuring, we have approved continued operations of several important and viable specialized councils. During the last two months, we asked current councils to apply for continued operations by providing substantial documentation of recent activity and assessing how well they met criteria for specialized councils. The criteria for continued operations focused on four characteristics:

1. The SIC has a minimum of 75 NLTA members.
2. The curriculum, programs or services delivered by SIC members are designed to be offered by individuals who have received specialized training which qualifies them to function at all levels of schooling.
3. Typically, in medium to large schools, one or a small number of individuals deliver the program or services to all grade levels.
4. A national or international affiliate organization exists.

In September 2006, there will be approximately seven specialized councils offering membership to NLTA members employed in the area of specialization. Details regarding specialized councils will be announced following approval by Provincial Executive at its June meeting.

What Will Special Interests Councils Offer?

Special Interest Councils are professional learning communities dedicated to lifelong learning and the ongoing professional growth of our members. Their mandate includes offering a range of PD programs including conferences, institutes, focus groups, teleconferences and e-learning initiatives.

Each council will also maintain a web site and circulate at least two newsletters a year. As they have for many years, councils will respond to curriculum and program concerns, develop position papers on critical issues, work with government on curriculum development, and advise the NLTA on matters of importance.

How Can I Become Involved?

One of the powerful features of the new model is that you will automatically be a member of one of the levels councils and may choose to join others. Beyond this, there are a number of leadership opportunities within the new levels-based councils. Each levels council will have a geographic-based core Executive comprising President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Communications Officer. If you and a group of colleagues are interested in putting your names forward as a slate of officers, I'd love to hear from you. In addition to the Core Executive, each levels council will have additional executive members representing each of the subject and special interest areas operating within your school. There are no geographic restrictions for these executive members and, if you have an interest in representing your subject area on either of the levels executives, please let me know.

René Wicks and SIC representatives explore future possibilities for council organization and activities.

In the Fall of 2006 there will be a major meeting and orientation session for the levels council executives as well as executives of the specialized councils. I hope to see some of you there. I encourage you to consider becoming involved at the leadership level and am very much looking forward to tremendous possibilities under the new model!

René Wicks is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

Turning Policy Into Action in Inclusive Schools

by LIONEL LUMB

Noreen O'Haire remembers well the "huge positive spirit" that imbued the three days of the CTF conference on *Building Inclusive Schools: A Search for Solutions*. As Director of the Canadian Teachers' Federation's Professional and Developmental Services, and the prime mover behind the conference, she regards it as one of the most professionally satisfying projects on which she's worked.

But she says that's nowhere near as important as whether the speakers, the workshops and the post-conference wealth of resource material will make a difference for Canada's teachers, struggling as they are with the challenges of diversity in its many forms.

O'Haire says: "There's no such thing as a teacher who doesn't have a diverse classroom in one form or another. Being a teacher for 20 years as I was, the thought that if we could help provide some information, provide teachers with resources, then let's have a conference to achieve that."

Building Inclusive Schools was held in November 2005 in Ottawa. O'Haire says its success partly came through "its blending of four key strands, with each area explored as fully as any other: the Aboriginal voice in education; gender orientation; racism; and children with learning difficulties."

Buoyed by the generally favourable feedback to the conference, O'Haire knows that much hard work lies ahead. "The trick is to not lose momentum. We hope, of course, that the 400 people who took part went back home and shared their knowledge and the spirit that made the conference a success with at least two others."

That sentiment is echoed by CTF President Winston Carter who further explains how we need to expand the ripple effect of this conference. "We need to work in cooperation with teachers, parents, school administrators and policy makers to develop the confidence and leadership skills required to build inclusive classrooms. The target is to break down barriers to a free, open and inclusive society where it is accepted and understood that our majority is a compilation of our diverse minorities."

Both O'Haire and Carter take encouragement from news of follow-up events. For instance, on April 7 and 8, 2006, the Equity Committee of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union sponsored a conference entitled *The Language of Equity*. Workshop presentations dealt with gender/sexual orientation and race/multi-culturalism.

In April 2007, the Manitoba Teachers' Society is sponsoring a conference whose theme is: *Diversity, Democracy, Dignity – Fostering world rights in our local schools.*

"We're trying to recognize that we have a world of children in our classrooms from all over the globe," says conference chair Pat Isaak, also vice-president of MTS. "(We) as teachers have to ensure we understand all of our students and ensure we give them the best education we can."

These two initiatives reflect the outcomes O'Haire was hoping for when she and CTF's committees were planning the conference. "Our committees had worked on diversity, with particular emphasis on Aboriginal education and Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Two-Spirited (BGLTT) issues. So it seemed like an opportune time to blend all those needs together into a conference that would by its very nature broaden the definition of inclusive education."

They wanted to go beyond the more traditional definition of children with special needs, and of behavioral and mentally challenged kids in classrooms. They sought to look at a whole range of other children based on language, on culture, and on sexual orientation.

As O'Haire puts it, "We wanted to go past awareness to show what people were doing to make a difference. So that's why we chose *A Search for Solutions* as the tag end of the (conference) title and, indeed, some of the presentations succeeded and showed how teachers are going beyond awareness."

It's possible to create change with policy, and CTF strives to be out front with policy. For instance, she says, "Ten years ago you couldn't even have a conversation in schools about BGLTT issues. But CTF-FCE came up with policy – and some member organizations

even developed theirs earlier – and now things are very different."

However, O'Haire stresses you can only take policy so far. Real change comes with leadership and practical solutions, and that's where she hopes the November discussions really helped.

Two quotations from featured speakers at the conference illustrate what can and is being done.

Carol Ann Tomlinson, of the University of Virginia and a public school teacher for 21 years, talked about two epiphanies she experienced during her first years of teaching. The first involved a student who could not read, the second a student on whom all classmates depended to answer Tomlinson's questions. She realized the year had been wasteful for both – that her dilemma was to challenge the very bright student while supporting the student with very special needs.

Tomlinson told her audience: "When equity and excellence flourish, the result is opportunity for each individual to develop and use the best that resides in that individual for the betterment of self and society."

Dr. Vianne Timmons, of the University of Prince Edward Island, told the conference leadership that promotes inclusive education is critical in today's schools. "Leadership is about dreams and ideals. It is about making our schools a place where all children feel welcome, treasured, safe… The quality of our education should be measured by the quality of education provided for the most vulnerable children in our schools. Not for the average child but the most vulnerable."

Both Tomlinson and Timmons, together with other featured speakers and panelists, offered a treasure lode of advice and practical measures to assist teachers to work towards making schools truly inclusive. Some of their PowerPoint presentations and workshop summaries are available at www.ctf-fce.ca.

That's just one of the ways in which Noreen O'Haire is trying to keep that "critical momentum" going. CTF has also published its report on Building Inclusive Schools at: www.ctf-fce.ca/bilingual/issues/inclusive/Conference_Report.pdf. It contains a summary of the three keynote presentations and the 17 featured speaker presentations that took place during the conference.

O'Haire's eyes twinkle as she leans forward to talk about a new and parallel conference she's hoping to organize in the near future. "That one would focus on social justice issues, making use of the bedrock of union activities, exploring diversity and equity, and – as always – marrying the findings into helping children with special needs. It always comes back to making all children feel welcome, treasured, safe," she says.

Lionel Lumb is a former journalist and professor of journalism at Carleton University.

Three Decades – Am I Really That Old?

by CARMELITA TRAVERSE

This month, I will be retiring after a 30-year teaching career that included Primary to High School, and even two great years as an assistant administrator. I decided to be a teacher when I was a Grade 6 student. I have been fortunate to have a fairly satisfying career with its successes and challenges. One would expect no less in three decades of a profession! Three decades – am I that old? I guess I'll have to get over that!

"Districts and the NLTA must continue to strive to support all teachers, especially those entering the profession. I sincerely encourage young teachers (or any teachers) to become involved in the Association or at least ensure that you are aware of your rights."

It is logical that in such a lengthy career, very significant changes would occur relating to the nature of the profession. Indeed, many of these have been positive and necessary changes. However, in the past few years I have really felt overwhelmed by many of the stresses over which we have little or no control. The workload issue which includes an endless list such as class size and composition, course load, new programs, after-school meetings, duty – just to name a few – has been documented by Dr. Lynda Younghusband, Dr. David Dibbon and others.

One of the major challenges that I have had to deal with the past couple of years is severe disruptive, even abusive, behaviour. What really worries me, even as I get ready to retire, is the degree of severity in behaviour that teachers and administrators are expected to deal with on a daily basis. Teaching and learning is seriously impeded, and while administrators and teachers struggle with these situations, little reprieve is forthcoming from other sources. I am not looking to lay blame! Districts have increased in size so much so that they are sometimes unmanageable. District personnel do their best, but support is limited by finances, resources and due processes. Outside agencies are involved, but getting any improvements takes an inordinate amount of time. Many of these issues are societal in nature and schools are not equipped to deal with them. I want to point out that when I was in such a situation, I was extremely fortunate to have a supportive staff and administration at school as well as support from the Association. So, at present, I consider myself relatively unscathed by the constant stress of dealing with a serious behaviour issue. Sadly, this kind of stress eats up our energy and enthusiasm. Yet, endless great things go on in our schools! One of my good friends, a high school teacher, calls it demoralizing. No one seems to know what to do about it.

At the risk of sounding like a "burnt out", "stressed out" person, I want to focus on one very positive aspect which has permeated my teaching career. About mid-career (20+ years ago), I was encouraged by some colleagues to become a member of the local branch of the NLTA. Since then, I have remained directly involved with the Association. The friendships and respect that this afforded me has been humbling and rewarding, both personally and professionally. Don't ever let anyone tell you that 3 Kenmount Road is the NLTA! The staff personnel that I have had the honour of working with over the years are super! They are professional and compassionate and are there for all members. My Branch has shown me nothing but respect and for that I indeed express my sincere gratitude. This is something that I will miss when I retire. However, I fully intend to stay involved in the Association, perhaps via the Retired Teachers' Association.

To close on a positive note, in March I attended another Joint Council session of the NLTA. It was the most encouraging atmosphere that I have seen in a

long time. With the recent budget announcements, it seems that we are at least getting some recognition of some of the major issues in education. We have a long way to go, but I applaud those who are moving in that direction. I would be remiss if I did not make mention of the ongoing work of the Eastern School District in conducting forums in which teachers can express their legitimate concerns. My one wish as I leave this profession is that this momentum will continue and result in short-term and long-term "solutions" that our system desperately needs. I thank and congratulate my lifetime friend, our President, Kevin Foley, and Vice-President Sean Noah, for the leadership shown and have every confidence in their dedication and commitment to improving the quality of life for our teachers.

I think my writing was partly inspired by the article "Yes, I Still Want to be a Teacher" by a young man in the March 2006 issue of *The Bulletin*. I am always awestruck by the energy, knowledge and enthusiasm of teachers entering this profession. This year I have the privilege of working with several such young people and they are an inspiration to all of us. One such young person, a colleague of mine this year, is a true mentor to me! Districts and the NLTA must continue to strive to support all teachers, especially those entering the profession. I sincerely encourage young teachers (or any teachers) to become involved in the Association or at least ensure that you are aware of your rights.

Finally, to the young writer (Adam), keep wanting to be a teacher! Keep being a hero to those students! Above all, keep your sense of humour!

Yes, I wanted to be a teacher. Now I am ready for the next busy phase of my life, with the hope that I can enjoy some years of healthy, active living with my family and friends.

Carmelita Traverse is a teacher at St. Edward's Elementary in Placentia and President of the Placentia Branch of the NLTA.

Retirement: Passivity or Renewal?

by HECTOR M. EARLE

After two years of soul searching and going beyond my proverbial "30 and out", I will retire in June of this year. I shall be forever free from bells, lessons plans, schedules, fire drills, report cards, deadlines and supervision. And I shall look forward to endless freedom to salmon fish, golf, sleep in, yarn, or whatever else I choose. Just imagine… one day I'll be at work and the next day I will be retired. After three decades of standing in front of the classroom, laboring in my office, conducting and attending meetings of every description, suddenly I will be free to pursue woodwork, write that book, spend time with the grandkids, work in my green house, get back into shape, and a host of other pursuits and interests of my choosing.

Right now I can't imagine having time to do just what I want to do. Since the age of five I've been involved in education in some way, shape or form. Whether it was in my formal years in elementary and high school, my university training or my 31 years of teaching, I can't remember September rolling around and not starting school. I have been so used to rigid schedules, routines, assembling information, giving directions, solving problems, making decisions and arranging things, that come next September I may be a little off kilter. One might say this is a small price to pay for my newfound freedom, right? I should think it's pretty easy to adapt to this lovely long holiday – a summer without end. It all seems so surreal.

However, once I part company with my classroom and colleagues, I often wonder if all this leisure and enjoyable activities will fulfill that sense of meaning and purpose I now enjoy as a teacher. Will I miss my job and that feeling of juggling through the challenges of everyday school life? The kind of challenge that keeps one sharp and focused. Will my hobbies and leisure fulfill that gap? Will I find something just as purposeful or will the voyage into retirement take me into uncharted waters that will leave me scared, bored and found wanting?

The idea of retirement tends to push some into discouragement and despair. After all, who are you when you no longer define yourself by your job? It can be a troubling passage for some and perhaps a little scary as one slides from the grand stage of being a teacher into the anonymity of private life. Still others see retirement as an exciting time of rediscovery and renewal. They view this stage of life as a second chance for new opportunities and ambitions, a kind of liberation from the routines of a scheduled and structured life. They are now masters of their own destiny and can now renew themselves to embark upon new horizons and directions in life.

For me, I hope to find a healthy balance between leisure and work that will still permit me to enjoy the fruits of my labor as a teacher, yet allow me to be engaged in meaningful activities where I can still feel significant, contributory and valued. It's all about that comfortable feeling of knowing that I will no longer be in that inflexible position of schedules and clocks but instead I will have the free time to do the things I always wanted to do and the chance to find the time to fine tune my interests and talents in other capacities. Don't get me wrong; I've had a great run as a teacher. I have been so fortunate to be part of this whole forum of education in this province. I've learned so much from students and colleagues alike and I'm forever indebted to all the wonderful people who made my career a most rewarding and enjoyable one. But now it's time to pass the torch and move on to serve in other areas and give back to the community that has served me so well. I shall still attempt to maintain some of the practices and virtues that have sustained me over my career such as being active in mind, body and spirit, maintaining my exercise routine, living my faith and especially the joy and satisfaction I've gotten from helping others. The only difference is that I suspect I should have more time to do things at my own pace and a perfect time to look inward, outward and forward.

I guess when it's all said and done, coming to terms with this phase of life is not so much as viewing retirement as a period ending a sentence, but a comma, briefly interrupting a sentence that has yet more to say.

Hector Earle is a Grade 4 teacher and Grade 7 math teacher at Riverwood Academy, Wing's Point, Gander Bay, NL.

Purpose

by BEVERLEY PARK

Like the good daughter that I am, I try to keep in touch with my mother on a regular basis. When possible, that's a visit or most often it means a phone call. After the relief of finding out that, for the most part, everything's okay – no major incidents or illness – the conversations are calm…too calm, in fact. I worry that this once vibrant and active woman is settling into old age. Now, despite the fact that she's 80-something, this has been bothering me. Worse, I think it's been bothering her. My mother has never "settled" for anything in her life. There's too much talent, creativity, experience, intelligence – too much potential for her to keep under her hat – even if it was a red one!

Then one day last week on my first, second, third and even fourth attempted call, I kept getting connected to the repeated rhythmic droning of a busy signal. When I finally did manage to reach her some time later, I detected in Mom's voice a level of energy (even excitement) that I had not heard for some time. Assuming it was a kind of spring fever, and just gratefully accepting the pleasant change, I didn't inquire much about it. However, it didn't take long for her to tell me that she'd been busy all day, that she still had a few calls to make, and was expecting some call-backs! "Whoa!" I thought. "Mom's been abducted by some granny-abusing telemarketing company from up along!" Thankfully that wasn't the case. She wasn't being paid slave wages for hours of thankless work. Turns out she was calling around the community selling turkey suppers as a fund-raiser for the church.

As she reported on her task, her approach, her anticipated success rate, it was obvious that my mother was proud of herself and the work she had done that day. She was doing something that had meaning for her, and she was getting results. Now don't get me wrong, Mom does meaningful things every day of her life. She lives independently in her own home. She cooks. She cleans. If you drive by her house you'll see a line of clothes stretching out from the front step. But Mom's enthusiasm for her task of selling turkey teas caused me to think…and I realized that aside from those things that have personal meaning for us, it is important that we feel we make a contribution outside of ourselves. As I continue to reflect on this I am once again reminded of why our profession is such a satisfying one. Teachers can get that buzz of accomplishment and purpose every single day. And even though it can be frustrating to sometimes leave school with more "TO DO" than "DONE", there's (believe it or not) something to be said for that too!

Most will have heard of Viktor Frankl's famous story of survival in the concentration camps of WWII. He attributes his ability to carry on despite the unbearably demoralizing conditions of the camps to his having a goal as yet unachieved, a dream yet to be lived. We are no different.

I'm not a big fan of country music but once in a while a line from a song will capture my attention. Around the time I was writing this I heard a tune about a guy with "nothing to do and all day to do it". Well, that might be a pretty appealing circumstance for a few weeks in the summer, and there might be a tinge of regret in September the first morning that alarm clock clicks in, but we should be thankful for that purpose that gets us out of bed. And when it gets *real* busy, I bet there's someone like my mother in your neighbourhood who'd love to be of service!

As you read this, Mother's Day has just passed – and I want to acknowledge the fact that my mother never ceases to amaze me, to teach me important lessons in the way she lives her life. As much as anything, this is written as a reminder to her, and to all of us, that there's always a purpose as long as someone is learning from us.

Beverley Park is an Administrative Officer in the Professional Development Division of the NLTA.

Literacy Development

Skills and Strategies in the Primary Curriculum

by DIANE GOOSNEY

See Dick run.
See Jane run.
See Dick and Jane run.

While this passage may elicit pleasant memories for some today, it is not considered to be a very exciting approach to teaching reading and, in fact, has been condemned by most educators in the modern world where children need to be able to think critically, to question, to make decisions, to understand the many messages they receive daily, and to be technologically proficient.

Today, we are more likely to find classrooms where teachers use a more holistic approach to teaching. We would more likely see an activity such as the following: A primary class teacher prepares to read a story to the class; together they look at the title and pictures; they talk about the author and illustrator, the date of publication, other books they may have already read by the author; they make predictions about the book; the children listen as the teacher reads; they engage in discussion, test their predictions and share their personal responses; they then draw and write in their response journals.

As a result, children are engaged in learning that is meaningful to them, they are responding personally, they are constructing their own knowledge about the world and how it works. They are learning to be analytical in their thinking and to become critical consumers – important goals of education.

However, many students in the early primary grades have not yet developed the skills to maximize their learning and be successful in such an approach. Most of my work experience has been as a special education teacher responsible for remedial reading at the primary/elementary level. My findings are that students whose programs initially focus on direct teaching of reading skills and strategies show the most significant gains.

This year, as a Grade One teacher I had an opportunity to try this approach in the classroom. My thinking was that if students were taught skills and strategies early in the year they would more rapidly move through the process of becoming not only independent in their reading and writing, but also in their higher-level thinking processes.

The Department of Education requires Grade One teachers to assess students twice a year for early literacy skills, using tests of phonemic awareness, dictation, sight word lists and reading records. Using these areas as a guide, my instruction at the beginning of the year focused on teaching students to segment and blend sounds, to build their sight words knowledge, to develop their print skills through dictation, and to develop their decoding and reading skills. A systematic program of phonics instruction (matching letters to sounds) was also used and formed the basis of a weekly spelling program. Other components of the program were a reading series that is both modern and interesting, regular assessment, and conferencing with parents.

Students were assessed in January and the results indicated excellent half-year progress and a class that is continuing to show steady progress. The majority of the students are on their way to reaching a transitional level of reading which will enable them to transfer their skills to unfamiliar material and read independently. It has become clear that as students develop skills and confidence they begin to view reading as a pleasurable activity to be enjoyed in their free time, not just another subject taught in school.

Specifically, many students learned skills early and easily. They learned to read sight words in isolation as well as in stories. They learned word-attack and spelling skills through sound-letter matching and a structured spelling program. Through dictation, they are learning to write sentences independently, sounding out words or finding them in their environment.

They are learning to use word walls and charts. They are learning the conventions of writing so that now many are able and confident to write pieces to be displayed. However, the greatest achievement seems to be in their reading skills, with many of the students reading competently at grade level.

Other teaching strategies which contributed to the success of the program were previewing material, individualized instruction, a structured homework program, technology, and integration of skills throughout the curriculum.

This class of Grade One students have not only become competent readers and writers, but are learning to be critical thinkers. They have completed author studies and studied different genres of literature; they have learned about healthy eating habits and how to read food labels; they have learned about the solar system, water cycles, and life cycles; they have learned about caring for our world and their rights and responsibilities, all in a democratic environment in which they are learning to take an active role in deciding classroom rules, negotiating and developing problem-solving skills.

The term "whole language" seems to have almost disappeared from our vocabulary; however, many of the teaching methods are still in use and there is still confusion about how and when reading strategies should be taught at the primary level. Many teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach reading. I have heard this comment over and over again in the past five years as a teacher of reading instruction in summer institutes, and from practicum students in special education assigned to my class for a term placement. The same comment has come from both new and experienced teachers.

In summary, there is a place for direct teaching of early reading and writing skills and strategies within the context of the curriculum outcomes without having sacrificed any of the intent of the higher educational goals. Furthermore, to be most successful this program needs to be carried out in the earliest grades before students have had a chance to fail or to develop undesirable reading habits which would require intervention services. This approach is easy to teach, inexpensive to use and provides a level of success that would help reduce the need for special education support in the school system.

Diane Goosney is a Grade 1 teacher at Macpherson Elementary School in St. John's.

Social Justice and School Mission Statements

by LESLIE L. KENNEDY

Although I have been attending university this year, I have not been entirely out of the loop in regards to the provincial school improvement initiative. A leadership course in this area and a final paper in another required me to study the process. During my research I reviewed many mission statements from different types of organizations and what follows is the kind of statement I would like to see. Yes, it is long, but what we do for a living carries with it tremendous responsibility:

Our mission is to create a safe and caring environment that acknowledges and celebrates diversity and is committed to the support and accommodation of that diversity in an environment of lived social justice and respect. We also commit to helping each child realize his or her full potential both academically and personally and to be equipped to live successfully and satisfyingly in the twenty-first century. To achieve these ends we commit to creating a professional learning community ethic that includes administration, teachers, families, support staff and community stakeholders dedicated to development and delivery of outstanding programming.

Since social justice is the corner stone of my proposal, it is important to define it. R. W. Connell in his 1993 book, *Schools and Social Justice*, refers to Plato's notion that individual equality is the *condition*, not the goal, of a just social order. An excellent point. How many policies in schools and society express equality as a 'condition' and how might that impact their expression in practice? Connell says this state cannot be achieved by distributing the same amount of standard 'good' to children of all social classes. That 'good' means different things to ruling class and working class children and will do different things *for* them and/or *to* them. Understanding this would afford more respect to the marginalized. One needs to rethink the issue of justice in education around the issue of curriculum and that leads to Connell's idea of curricular justice.

The first principle of curricular justice states that the interests of the least advantaged shall be served first. We have made headway here with the spirit of the Pathways document but there is a distance to go. The power of a professional learning community turned to this task and the potential results would be tremendous. There needs to be as well more collective decision making and less of citizens receiving decisions made by others as the second principle states. The more thorough inclusion of parents in the *educational plan* for their children would help here. The third principle, the historical production of equality, is concerned with hegemony and has to do with the tension between participant citizenship and pursuing the interests of the least advantaged group. The social consequences for South East Asian society of having advantaged people educated in Australia will be quite different than if Australian aid, working at the village level, functions to raise villager's capacity to articulate their own needs and pursue them over time. If policy makers looked at the needs of the least advantaged from their own standpoint, I can't imagine our present system would still exist. Social justice is an enormous concept but its enactment is so important. Whether it is addressing social policy, or curriculum, or practice in schools and the classroom, I believe a social justice perspective is the only choice. Perhaps if society was only more careful of its policy formulation and more aggressive in its demands for universal social justice (a very broad, all encompassing, altruistic application to be sure) mission statements concerned with safety of any sort would be obsolete.

A good place to start the transformation is to develop a broader concept of 'family'. The Vanier Institute of Family's definition has influenced my understanding and thus my mission statement: *...any combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following:*

- *Physical maintenance and care of group members;*
- *Addition of new members through procreation or adoption;*
- *Socialization of children;*
- *Social control of members;*
- *Production, consumption, distribution of goods and services; and*
- *Affective nurturance – love.*

Even as I was writing my own statement I slipped into the habit of using the word 'parents' so the above

definition must be consciously attended to by all members of a school and committed to in the name of the right of any family to feel validated and psychologically 'safe'. My readings about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families, grandparent-headed families, native, immigrant and non white Anglo Saxon families, families headed by teens and/or non parent relatives or friends all reveal instances where dealing with and functioning in our schools is problematic, certainly sending the message of 'otherness'. Ryan and Martin reported the lived injustice of a sexual minority family, "At our school we suspend for racial slurs, but we do not for gay or lesbian slurs". Surely a professional learning community would prevent such experiences through education. It seems like a small thing, but the message it sends is powerful.

Despite the fact that we claim equality as a value and entrench it in our constitution, our lived reality can be very different. Students in an English study about pop culture's impact on their identity and belief systems showed acceptance of the disconnect between their school's ethos of valuing all as equals and yet effectively denying difference probably because it was also their paradoxical experience in the world beyond school. It is ironic that the very striving for equality has created a profound psychological conflict and, I believe, a considerable amount of stress caused by such an imbalance for the very people it was designed to help. I think that is because enough has not been done in conscious and deliberate ways to saturate society with examples of lived justice, thus initiating the deeper shift in values that we need in order to truly offer it. Schools seem a natural place for such a movement to take root especially given, in my experience, children's natural propensity for colour blindness and tolerance. Again, a professional learning community would support such initiative. Its dedication to best serving all students' academic needs too would improve overall student achievement, an important factor in the social justice equation.

The second, though not entirely unrelated, area that a socially just school would address, would be the unique issues and needs facing marginalized families. Of interest to me were the homework issues facing families marginalized by economics and education because they were so similar to those experienced by many more privileged middle income families dealing with the new societal pressures of our fast paced, technologically advancing world. Most middle to upper income, one and two parent families I know experience a good deal of stress because of extensive homework demands multiplied accordingly by their number of children. Mothers particularly, married or not, seem overtaxed for reasons studied in this course, one having to do with un-evolved labour roles assigned in families. Clearly the cultural capital possessed by these families makes their situations decidedly less dire than their lower income counterparts, but the marginalization of women needs to be fully addressed in school policy, practice and teaching materials. For families dealing with the limited education of those adults responsible for academically supporting the children, for those adults being forced to take low paying, sometimes inflexible jobs as a consequence of limited education, something must be done to prevent them from being unfairly perceived as unsupportive by teachers and their own children, leading again to stress and I think, psychological insecurity. Ties to community and government agencies might enable better delivery of services and support before negative consequences are felt.

To try and address all these issues in one statement is a challenge. To actually put the mission into practice though would not be so hard once a school becomes cognizant of the issues. From my own experience, part of the problem has been personally held values and beliefs that have been formed by an earlier society and transmitted to the next generation essentially unaltered even by formal shifts in political conscience. And the depth of these values so intricately tied to desires makes them stubbornly resistant to change. But that doesn't mean they should go unchallenged, and if society is ever going to truly reflect the best of its policies as well as go further to extend them and defy those policies which are not, there are all sorts of actions, big and small, that can begin the process. Providing creative ways for young children to diagram their families like a family snowflake (no two are alike and snowflake branches connect in infinitely mysterious and glorious ways!) instead of the family tree is both a small and big step. Getting rid of biased references on school forms that exclude non-traditional family arrangements, and in fact ridding our consciousness of that word 'traditional' and its attached expectations all together, would be another thing. Examining all school policy that impedes or eliminates just individual educational plan accommodations for students who have exceptional (or not so exceptional!) circumstances would be yet another. Embracing tolerance for diversity instead of pretending it does not exist for fear of being politically incorrect should be possible too, not to mention forthright acknowledgment and celebration of 'family' not so much as an institution as the living, breathing embodiment of the defining characteristic of humanity, the capacity to love.

Leslie Kennedy is Language Arts Department Head at Mobile Central High School. She is currently on deferred salary leave to complete her Master's degree in Literacy and Language.

Calendar

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

August 2006

Memorial University, St. John's. Practical Classroom Management Consulting will be offering two professional development sessions in Room 1043 of the Arts Annex at MUN, from 9 am to 3:30 pm each day. On August 14, a one-day session on "Meeting a Wide Range of Learners in your Classroom" will focus on strategies teachers can use in their classrooms to deal with a wide assortment of learning needs, especially struggling learners. Cost: $75. A two-day session on August 15 and 16 on "Classroom Discipline Techniques" will focus on ways to prevent discipline infractions from occurring, as well as addressing minor and major disruptions. Cost: $125. For information and to register on-line contact www.practicalclassrooms.ca, or send contact information and payment (made out to PCMC) to PCMC c/o Chris Boulter RR#2, Pictou, NS, B0K 1H0. For further information contact chris@practicalclassrooms.ca.

3RD ANNUAL ATLANTIC CAP LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

September 21-22, 2006

Holiday Inn, St. John's. Theme: *Leading the Band: Orchestrating Success*. Opening Address: Derrick Moore. Dinner Speaker: Karl Smith, CEO Newfoundland Hydro. Concurrent Sessions. Cost: $125. For information and registration form, contact www.mqp.k12.nf.ca/CAP.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEARNING DISABILITIES CALL FOR PAPERS

September 30, 2006 (submission deadline)

The 16th National Conference on Learning Disabilities, hosted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, will be held on September 27-29, 2007 at the Delta St. John's Hotel. The Program Committee invites proposals for sessions related to learning disabilities to be delivered as part of the conference program. For information contact the Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Tel: 709-753-1445, debbie.ldanl@nl.rogers.com.

COSS WORKSHOPS

Fall 2006

September 14 – Mount Peyton Hotel, Grand Falls-Windsor; September 15, Airport Inn, St. John's. **Teaching in the Mixed Ability Classroom: Brain Biology and the Layered Curriculum**. Featuring Dr. Kathie Nunley. This workshop begins with an entertaining look into current brain research. The second half focuses on solutions for meeting the needs of diverse learners in today's inclusive classroom. For information contact Keith Adey, Tel: 709-292-5727.

October 16-17 – Grand Falls-Windsor. **Anger Management/De-escalation (Train-the-Trainer)**. Participants will learn practical verbal and physical intervention techniques of de-escalating potentially violent situations. October 18-19 – Grand Falls-Windsor. **Bullying Stops When Respect Begins (Train-the-Trainer)**. Participants will learn strategies to help address the issue of bullying in schools. For more information, visit www.keystosaferschools.com or see the February 2006 COSS newsletter.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR COUNSELLORS' AND PSYCHOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION (NLCPA) ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE AND AGM

October 18-20, 2006

Battery Hotel, St. John's. A block of rooms have been reserved for the conference (Tel: 1-800-563-8181). Full Conference Sessions and Concurrent Sessions will be offered.

Wednesday evening: Registration and Meet & Greet. Thursday's Workshop: Mr. Gary Direnfeld, "The Effects of Children Witnessing Domestic Violence and Implications for Counsellors Working With Them" (www.yoursocialworker.com). Thursday evening: Honourable Joan Burke and other invited guests – Open Forum to address issues in counselling and school psychology. Friday's Workshop: Mr. Gerry Dooley, "Self-Mutilation" (www.gerrydooley.com). Concurrent sessions also scheduled for Friday.

For further information contact Tom George, Vice President NLCPA: Tel: 709-643-9525 ext 12; tom.george@wnlsd.ca.

NLTA Summer Hours

June 26 - September 1

Monday to Thursday
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Friday
8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Kids Eat Smart Week

October 16-20, 2006

Kids Eat Smart Week is set for October 16-20, with the Kids Eat Smart Province-Wide Walk to Breakfast scheduled for October 20, 2006.

Last year upwards of $30,000 was raised at the school level to support Kids Eat Smart Clubs! Schools are reminded to check with their School Councils to ensure they can be part of this fun, healthy, fundraising event for their Kids Eat Smart Club.

For more information, call **1-877-722-1996**.